



## OFFICE OF RIVER PROTECTION

P.O. Box 450, MSIN H6-60  
Richland, Washington 99352

August 26, 2015

Mr. Sean Sullivan  
Board Member  
Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board  
625 Indiana Avenue NW, Suite 700  
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Sir:

I have been intimately involved with the Office of River Protection organizational and safety culture issues since April of 2010. Therefore, I believe that I am in a unique position to provide you an important perspective. First, considerable progress has been made in addressing Office of River Protection (ORP) organizational and safety culture issues. Many significant (priority level one findings) technical issues have been raised that impact the Department's efforts to complete the Waste Treatment Plant. These include issues raised in 2010 on Waste Treatment black cells, pulse jet mixing, erosion/corrosion and design margin to name a few. Today, active closure of these issues is being pursued. The fact that these issues have been raised, documented, and are being actively pursued has substantially relieved organizational stress. The crises of 2011 still affect us today but we are recovering. However, without an empowered intercessory/advocate role that invokes improved communications between staff and management, the progress in raising organizational and safety culture issues will continue to be hindered.

Since the issuance of the Defense Board's Recommendation 2011-1, the Organizational Safety Culture Improvement Council (OSCIC) has implemented numerous success stories that speak for themselves. I believe that the work of the founding members of OSCIC including my predecessor, Dabrisha Smith have been key to the improvements that we are seeing today. Both I and Dabrisha have served in our roles as OSCIC Chairpersons as outlets for staff to raise concerns. These issues are largely organizational and safety culture concerns rather than Employee Concerns that are attended to separately.

OSCIC has worked to relieve staff concerns by serving as intercessors with ORP management. In turn, ORP management has been very supportive of OSCIC's role in helping to bring about a strong organizational and safety culture. ORP management at all levels has made it clear that they have an open door policy. It has also been significant that ORP management is working to enable actions recommended by the Council.

Recently, OSCIC has become more proactive in its role in serving as an intercessor between ORP staff and management to resolve organizational and safety culture issues. Many issues have been successfully addressed because OSCIC has put the issues on the table as a neutral party. Unattended, these issues fester, and if they remain unattended they can result in extreme



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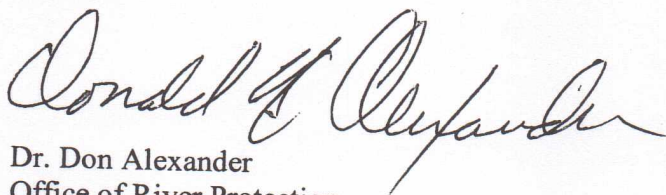
frustration which can cause staff members to seek outlets to assure that their issue is addressed. However, from an organizational psychology perspective use of external outlets can dramatically impact staff perception of our organizational and safety culture progress.

Unsupported external actions can have a damaging affect because there is an erosion of staff confidence in internal mechanisms. However, I believe that mechanisms are in place as avenues for staff to access anonymously or through OSCIC representation.

In one important case, OSCIC has been working to expedite the resolution of technical issues raised by technical experts who authored the Draft LAW Design and Operability Report. Considerable progress has been made in accelerating the completion of the report as a result of OSCIC intercessory negotiations. Management and staff have agreed on the path forward. However, the recently unauthorized release of the draft report will certainly have a negative impact on staff perceptions. Once again, ORP staff will believe that the available mechanisms are not working. However, this is not the case. The unauthorized release could have been handled by utilizing current mechanisms that are in place today and the intercessory/advocate role being administered by OSCIC.

Bottom line: I have seen first-hand the success that has been brought to bear on the resolution of issues raised in the draft report as well as in other contested issues due to OSCIC's intercessory involvement. Therefore, to achieve a highly performing organization where issues are freely raised and discussed, it is clear to me that a strengthened OSCIC intercessory/advocate role is needed. Empowering OSCIC with a strengthened intercessory/advocate role will provide staff and management with a forum for raising issues that need immediate attention. The current organizational and safety culture has significantly improved since 2010. Strengthening the OSCIC intercessory/advocate role will take the organization to the next level.

Sincerely,



Dr. Don Alexander  
Office of River Protection  
Chairman, Organizational and Safety Culture Council